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Disarmament Commission
325th meeting
Thursday, 5 April 2012, 3 p.m.
New York

Chair: Mr. Román-Morey ..... (Peru)

The meeting was called to order at 3.35 p.m.

General debate (*continued*)

Mr. Zhang Junan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, the Chinese delegation would like once again to congratulate the Chair on his assumption of the chairmanship of the current session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We are very happy to see that, under his excellent leadership and with his tireless efforts, parties have reached agreement on the agenda for the current UNDC session. The Chinese delegation looks forward to working with him and other delegations. We would also like to thank his predecessor, Ambassador Hamid Al Bayati of Iraq, for his efforts. We sincerely congratulate Ms. Kane on becoming the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and we welcome her to that post.

In today's world, a variety of uncertain and unstable factors are on the rise, and international politics, economies and security arrangements are undergoing complex and profound changes. An increased number of shared interests and greater interdependence in the field of security have bound all countries to a common destiny. Countries have the responsibility to work together to maintain security through cooperation, promote development through stability, work for positive developments in the international security situation and make progress on multilateral arms control processes. We therefore call on all countries to embrace the new security concept of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination.

To fully respect and accommodate the legitimate security concerns of countries and to carry out dialogue and cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual trust, the year 2012 is the beginning of the new cycle of the UNDC. China sincerely hopes that all parties will be constructive and ensure that the cycle achieves positive results.

Nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation have been high on the UNDC agenda for years. Under the current circumstances, China would like to reiterate the following.

First, the countries with the largest nuclear arsenals bear the special and primary responsibility for nuclear disarmament and should continue to make drastic and substantive reductions in their nuclear arsenals. When the conditions are ripe, other nuclear-weapon States will also join the multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament. At the appropriate time, the international community should develop a viable long-term phased plan, including the conclusion of a convention on the complete prohibition of nuclear weapons.

Secondly, nuclear-weapon States should reduce the role of such weapons in their national security policies, unequivocally undertake not to be the first to use nuclear weapons, unconditionally agree not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon

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States or nuclear-weapon-free zones, and conclude an internationally binding legal instrument on that subject as soon as possible.

Thirdly, all parties should work together to promote the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. The Conference on Disarmament in Geneva should agree on a comprehensive and balanced programme of work and launch its substantive work as soon as possible, including negotiations on a fissile material cut-off treaty.

Faced with the complicated and volatile situation of non-proliferation, the international community should foster a peaceful and stable international and regional security environment of mutual trust and cooperation so as to eliminate the root cause for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). Parties should also work together to strengthen the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, ensure the impartiality and non-discriminatory nature of international nuclear non-proliferation efforts and strive to resolve regional nuclear hotspots through political and diplomatic means.

As President Hu Jintao stated at the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit on 27 March, China will as always push for the total prohibition and complete destruction of nuclear weapons, abide by the policy of not being the first to use nuclear weapons, be committed to international nuclear non-proliferation efforts and support the right of countries to the peaceful use of nuclear energy. China has implemented the outcome document of the eighth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, supports the 2012 international conference on the establishment of a zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMDs in the Middle East, and firmly opposes nuclear terrorism in all its forms.

China has called for a peaceful settlement of the Korean peninsula and Iran nuclear issues through dialogue and negotiations. We hope that the parties will commit themselves to resolving those issues through diplomatic means and that they will exercise restraint and demonstrate flexibility in order to advance dialogue and cooperation.

China supports practical and feasible confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons. For years, China has continuously and actively promoted and participated in international regional disarmament processes and confidence-building measures, bilaterally and multilaterally, in frameworks such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Regional Forum of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia.

China has been working with relevant countries to explore and implement confidence-building measures aimed at enhancing trust and promoting security. China also participated in the United Nations Standardized Instrument for Reporting Military Expenditures and the United Nations Register of Conventional Weapons, and is committed to building confidence in that field.

The United Nations conference on an arms trade treaty will be held in July 2012. The second Review Conference on the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects will be held in August. China believes that the international community will work to regulate the arms trade and combat illicit arms transfers and trafficking. China is willing to participate constructively in those discussions.

The first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament established the multilateral arms control disarmament machinery, including the First Committee, the UNDC and the Conference on Disarmament — bodies that are mutually reinforcing and complementary. The UNDC is an integral part of the machinery and an important deliberative body. Over the years, it has made contributions to the cause of multilateral disarmament and arms control. While the UNDC has encountered some difficulties, we hope that parties will take a rational and practical view vis-à-vis the Commission and, for the sake of preserving its authority, support every means to strengthen its role and effectiveness.

Mr. Seifi Pargou (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. Chair, the other members of the Bureau and the Chairs of the Working Groups on your elections, as well as to assure you of the full cooperation of my delegation in achieving a successful outcome to the current session of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). I would also like to congratulate and wish every success to Ms. Angela Kane on her appointment as the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

I wish also to associate myself with the statement made yesterday by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

After the horrendous nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, which are the only instances of

the use of nuclear weapons to date, nuclear disarmament has always been the highest priority of the international community. For that reason, the very first resolution adopted by the General Assembly — unanimously at its first session, on 24 January 1946 — called for the total elimination of the atomic bomb. Unfortunately, the continued existence of thousands of deployed and non-deployed strategic and non-strategic nuclear weapons around the world continues to seriously threaten international peace and security and the very survival of human civilization.

While there exists no pretext that justifies the possession of nuclear weapons in the hands of any country, it is a source of grave concern that certain nuclear-weapon States continue to allocate billions of dollars to the development of new types of nuclear weapons, build new nuclear-weapons production facilities and modernize and replace such weapons. Equally, in contravention of their obligations under article VI of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), those countries continue to resort to obsolete nuclear-deterrence policies and to promote the role and status of nuclear weapons in their defence and security doctrines. Despite the repeated claims of certain nuclear-weapon States with regard to compliance with their legal obligations in the field of nuclear disarmament, the latest facts and figures throw the validity and credibility of such claims into question.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, along with the overwhelming majority of States, maintains its principled position that the total elimination of nuclear weapons, as the highest priority, is the only absolute guarantee against the use or threat of use of such weapons. In that regard, while supporting the proposal of the Non-Aligned Movement on the adoption of a legal framework for the total elimination of nuclear weapons by 2025, we emphasize the high priority and prime importance of starting negotiations on a nuclear-weapons convention and a universal and unconditional legally binding instrument on negative security assurances to all non-nuclear-weapon States.

With regard to the stated intention by some nuclear-weapon States to reduce part of their nuclear-weapons arsenals, we are of the view that limited bilateral and unilateral arms reductions are far below the expectations of the international community for real and effective steps towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and can never be a substitute for the obligation of nuclear-weapon States to completely eliminate all of their nuclear weapons. Moreover, such reductions should go beyond the mere decommissioning of nuclear weapons and, in any case, they must be irreversible, transparent and internationally verifiable.

At the same time, the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament is not the only challenge facing the international community, as some nuclear-weapon States are proliferating nuclear weapons horizontally and vertically by continuing nuclear-weapon sharing arrangements with non-nuclear-weapon as well as other nuclear-weapon States.

The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the best way to guarantee the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is by fully and non-selectively implementing the NPT and by ensuring its universality, particularly in the Middle East, where the nuclear-weapons programme of the only non-party to the Treaty, with the assistance of France, seriously threatens regional and international peace and security. To overcome that problem, in 1974, Iran proposed the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. But efforts to establish such a zone have not yet succeeded, due to the persistent refusal of the Zionist regime to join the NPT and to place its nuclear facilities under the safeguards system of the International Atomic Energy Agency. In that context, the implementation of the relevant resolution of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties is essential for the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and for the universality of the Treaty in the Middle East.

In the Final Document (resolution S-10/2) of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the General Assembly placed great emphasis on the need for removing the threat of nuclear weapons, on their total elimination and on preventing their proliferation. By identifying nuclear disarmament as the highest priority, the Assembly mandated the Disarmament Commission to follow up on the relevant decisions and recommendations of the special session, including on nuclear disarmament. Despite the Commission's many achievements, it is regrettable that during its lifetime, this body has not been able to formulate an exclusive set of recommendations on nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

The Commission is therefore strongly expected to accord priority to and focus on nuclear disarmament and the total elimination of nuclear weapons as the long-delayed part of its mandate. For obvious reasons,

the agenda item on nuclear disarmament, as decided by the General Assembly, is of the utmost relevance and importance.

My delegation reaffirms the important role and function of the UNDC as a deliberative body mandated to consider and make recommendations on major disarmament issues. The formulation of more than a dozen principles, guidelines and recommendations by the UNDC in the past is indicative of its important role and relevance.

My delegation stands ready to fully cooperate with other delegations during the current cycle of the Commission's work and to overcome the existing stalemate in this body, which, in our view, is rooted in a lack of political will on the part of certain countries.

We are also looking forward to working with you, Mr. Chair, and all delegations in achieving a successful outcome at this session of the Commission.

Mr. Proaño (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Sir, I should like at the outset, on behalf of my delegation, to congratulate you on your election and the other members of the Bureau on theirs. I should like also to express the appreciation and confidence of Ecuador in you personally and in your country. We would also like to welcome the appointment of Ms. Angela Kane as High Representative for Disarmament Affairs.

The delegation of Ecuador aligns itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Chile on behalf of Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Both covered in detail the concepts endorsed by and the views of my delegation, and for that reason I will not address those issues once again.

My delegation wishes to express its full commitment to the decisions and agreements reached in the framework of the first special session of the General Assembly on disarmament. We should like also to express our full support for the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) as the deliberative body of the disarmament machinery of the Organization, whose role is to consider and formulate recommendations on the various problems in the area of disarmament, and for the Conference on Disarmament as the sole forum for negotiations on disarmament.

For Ecuador, as for CELAC and NAM, nuclear disarmament is priority number one. Therefore, in line with the ideas that you, Sir, expressed at this morning's meeting, let me say that for Ecuador, South America and Latin America, as well as, I am certain, the vast majority of countries in the developing world, nuclear weapons are an unacceptable option and represent a total contradiction given the basic requirements for peace and development for all peoples of the world.

What I have just said is nothing new, but it is vital that we remain aware of it every day of our lives as long as nuclear weapons remain in existence. It probably does not seem new because we do not see anything happening. Despite the fact that the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons establishes quite clearly that the parties thereto are committed to pursuing negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to cessation of the nuclear-arms race and to nuclear disarmament, and on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control, the international community has seen no tangible sign of that legal commitment.

Nothing is happening, because despite the existence of a ruling from the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons from the perspective of international humanitarian law, and on the obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control, non-nuclear-weapon States have still not received any concrete indication that would allow us to believe that we are moving in that direction.

Unfortunately, as you, Mr. Chair, have noted in recent days, humankind has had to suffer the atrocities and devastation resulting from the use of nuclear weapons. Apparently that is not in itself sufficient for us to take a general and definitive stance on the total elimination of such weapons once and for all.

The question is, what will be sufficient? Recent history is clearly not enough, as it has not taught us that we are playing with fire or to avoid the risk of making the same mistake twice. For a country such as Ecuador, it is clear what is needed, as it is, I believe, for the majority of peoples and nations. My country therefore advocates with particular firmness the need for nuclear disarmament and the destruction of all nuclear weapons on the planet.

As a result, a Disarmament Commission agenda item entitled "Elements of a draft declaration of the 2010s as the fourth disarmament decade" will surely

be rejected. My country sees such an agenda item as essential, because Ecuador deems it unacceptable that, despite the facts I mentioned earlier, we are continuing today to talk about the existence of thousands of nuclear warheads. Any step in terms of nuclear disarmament that would not be definitive or include deadlines, time frames and indicators will not suffice, given the figures that I have just quoted.

In that context, given the various disarmament-related events that are planned for this year, and reaffirming its status as a State party to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of Tlatelolco — Ecuador expresses its strong and full support for the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East, which provides for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in that region and expresses the strong wish that that conference be held in 2012.

Now that an agenda for the Disarmament Commission has been decided on, we would like to express Ecuador's appreciation and congratulations for the work done and the efforts made. Sir, we have noted not only your experience and your knowledge in this area, but also your commitment and the transparency of the Commission's functioning. We extend these sentiments to the members of your team.

Finally, Sir, please be assured of the trust that my country places in you, which it believes has been amply rewarded in view of the determined manner in which you have led the work of the Commission.

Organization of work

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to draw the attention of the members of the Commission to the draft programme of work prepared by the secretariat, which is contained in document A/CN.10/2012/CRP.1. The document, which was circulated early this afternoon, contains a change on page 2 to correct an oversight.

Members will note that, in keeping with the principle of equality, each Working Group has been accorded seven meetings. On 9 April, informal plenary meetings will be held to consider the Commission's working methods as well as the issue of the fourth decade for disarmament. On the morning of 19 April, there will be a meeting to consider the recommendations arising from the informal meetings on 9 April.

May I take it that the Commission decides to take note of the draft programme of work contained in document A/CN.10/2012/CRP.1, including the change made on page 2, which indicates that the Working Groups will begin their work on 10 April?

Mrs. Ledesma Hernández (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for this draft proposal on the organization of work. With your permission, we would like to make a proposal, bearing in mind last year's experience whereby we discussed more than one subject on a given day. In order to bring greater coherence to our work, we would like to propose the following changes to you, Sir, as well as for the consideration of representatives.

We propose devoting a full day to each agenda item, without splitting them up, so as to afford us a better opportunity to exchange views and try to agree on language and consensus. In concrete terms, the proposal is as follows. On Monday, 9 April, we would take up the item on nuclear disarmament; on Tuesday, 10 April, we would take up the item on conventional weapons; on Wednesday, 11 April, we would again take up the nuclear item; on Thursday, 12 April, the item on conventional weapons; on Friday, 13 April, the nuclear item; and on Monday, 16 April, conventional weapons; with the afternoon of Tuesday, 17 April, which would be the Commission's last day of work, split between the two items. The informal meetings on working methods and elements for the fourth disarmament decade would take place on Wednesday, 18 April. That would allow us to continue our work on Thursday — as scheduled on the agenda — thereby giving us two consecutive days to discuss the topics of working methods and elements for the fourth disarmament decade. We hope that our proposal is acceptable to other delegations.

Mr. El Oumni (Morocco): I thank my colleague from Cuba for her proposal. Although it has never been done before, we have no problem with the proposal, if it is acceptable and feasible for other delegations. However, the informal debate should be held much earlier. If we want to have time to consult and negotiate a consensus outcome, we have to start doing that much earlier than she proposed.

Mr. Moktefi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I congratulate you, Mr. Chair, on the draft programme of work, which will allow us to move ahead with our work in a genuinely substantial manner.

My delegation does not wish to add confusion with regard to the draft programme of work. However, we would like to make a proposal that I believe is rooted in

best practice at the Commission. My proposal consists of blocs. Three full days would be devoted to each agenda item, with the informal discussion taking place on 18 April. A meeting would be held on 19 April to consider the recommendations emanating from the informal meeting. The outcome could therefore be negotiated throughout the morning of 19 April.

My delegation would also like to suggest that there be at least one plenary meeting at this session to summarize our work. I propose that such a meeting be held on Monday, 16 April. That would allow the Chair to summarize our discussions and provide guidance for the future. Delegations wishing to do so would also have an opportunity to express themselves in a more official manner about the conduct of our deliberations.

Mr. Vipul (India): My observations are quite similar to those that have already been made by our colleague from Algeria. We have two main substantive agenda items. I think that it is only logical that we begin our work with those two agenda items. Keeping in mind the practice that we have followed in the last few sessions of the Disarmament Commission, at least last year, I think it is also again logical that we conduct our work in blocs so that we are able to concentrate on one particular topic, rather than jumping from one agenda item to the other. I would therefore also like to propose that, beginning next Monday, we start with Working Group I, on nuclear disarmament. Once we allocate six or seven meetings to the Group, we should move to Working Group II. Once we complete our work in the Working Groups, we should proceed to informal meetings.

I would have liked to have at least two meetings on elements for the fourth disarmament decade, rather than only one. We have worked on such elements in the past, and we should allocate sufficient time so that all of us are able to make our comments on that agenda item.

At the end we can negotiate the outcome of those informal meetings. The Chair has already allocated some time in the programme for discussions and negotiations on those outcomes.

To recap, I believe that we should start with the agenda items first.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): My delegation would prefer the programme of work as you, Mr. Chair, presented it originally, and as amended by this second page that was circulated just before we started; in that after the holiday on 6 April, we would begin on Monday, 9 April, with an informal discussion on the methods of work and then another informal discussion on the fourth disarmament decade. That is all on 9 April. Then, on 10 April, we would begin our formal discussions in Working Groups I and II, oscillating back and forth right through to 18 April.

That, in my experience of covering Disarmament Commission meetings since 1998, is in fact the standard practice. I think it affords us an opportunity to focus on an issue, have a series of extensive discussions, and pause for a moment as we consider various proposals, especially when documents start coming out presenting particular recommendations. That oscillation, I have found, allows for consultations on the margins as each subject is discussed back and forth, day by day. That is the type of programme of work with which my delegation is comfortable. At least from where I am sitting, there does not seem to be consensus to change it.

Mr. Langeland (Norway): I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for submitting a proposal for organizing the work for the two remaining weeks. From my delegation's perspective, your proposal looks very good. It also builds on tradition. We are now building a bit on tradition, since we adopted much of the agenda item from the previous review cycle.

In many ways, we are entering a discussion here on the working method of the Disarmament Commission. There was a proposal previously that we cluster the different agenda items in different segments, which could allow more participation from capitals or from Geneva, either on nuclear weapons or on conventional weapons. That is something that my delegation is open to considering, but that would be better to consider for next year's session.

From my delegation's perspective, we would also very much appreciate starting on the working methods because our memories are now fresh with regard to how we have been striving on setting the agenda. We see a utility of discussing this issue early next week, when we have set aside time for it.

Another point is that we have not yet elected the Chair of Working Group II. We therefore need to find someone to guide our deliberations on confidence-building measures on conventional weapons.

For all practical purposes, we would suggest that we go forward with your programme of work for this year, Mr. Chair, and then consider how we will organize our work next year. As we have now adopted an agenda

for the cycle, we could see whether we could be more innovative for next year.

Mr. Kvarnström (Sweden): I would like to refer to the agenda and state the view of my delegation that we would definitely prefer the agenda suggestion as you have presented it to us. However, we could be flexible with regard to how we structure the different blocs between the two main agenda items, if that would be the wish of the members of the Commission

However, with regard to the placement of the working methods discussion, I am firmly of the belief that we should keep it on Monday. Not only do I feel that when we agreed to the package of the agenda, it was naturally assumed that when we said it would be part of the plenary, that plenary would simply continue on Monday.

I also believe, however, that the discussion of the other main agenda points would benefit from first having had the discussion on the working methods. That is exactly what we are discussing, namely, how we can improve the work that we do in the Commission. So let us retain the package deal that we had instead of trying to open it up and let us give ourselves the benefit of having the working methods discussion before we go into the agenda items.

Mr. Zieliński (Poland): I would like to echo other States in supporting your suggestion to retain the original proposal for the programme of work. We believe that it reflects a delicate balance achieved by adopting the agenda earlier today. We agreed to devote a half day to each informal meeting. Scheduling them for the beginning of next week will definitely allow the friends of the Chair to prepare for informal consultations and to achieve substantive outcomes from those consultations.

The same applies to the division of labour between the respective Working Groups. It is also our view that this should remain as it is set out in the programme of work right now.

Ms. González Román (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation is grateful for the programme of work that you, Mr. Chair, have proposed, as well as for the contributions made by delegations. We support the proposal you made initially, which is not only in line with the traditional way that the Commission works but also provides an adequate sequence for addressing the topics. Nevertheless, we could also consider addressing the various themes in clusters.

With regard to the informal consultations, we believe it is particularly important to consider the methods of work at the outset of the general debate at this session. In that way, we could benefit later from the discussions held on the issue.

Mr. D'Antuono (Italy): I should like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for submitting this programme of work. I would like to echo what other delegations have said. Our preference is to accept the proposal as it is, especially as regards formal meetings on working methods. I should make it clear that my delegation is not flexible on the subject of changing the structure of the agenda, as has been proposed by some other delegations.

Mr. Farghal (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Mr. Chair, I would like to congratulate you on the adoption of the agenda (A/CN.10/L.67/Rev.1) for the new three-year cycle of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). We should, perhaps, be able to adopt a programme of work with much less effort than we have had to devote to adopting the agenda.

The proposal made by the representative of Cuba, and subsequently amended by the representatives of Algeria and India, is logical for many reasons. First, we have yet to elect a Chair for Working Group II, on conventional weapons. Starting with Working Group II, on Monday — and let me congratulate Ambassador Naif Bin Bandar Al-Sudairy on his election as its Chair — that would also give us time to elect a Chair for Working Group II.

Secondly, as you know full well, Sir, several delegations have said that we should start early and adopt new working methods. I believe that this indicates a certain momentum towards adopting new working methods. As some of our colleagues have said, some of our working methods were developed in previous UNDC sessions of the Commission and, as we know, they have not been very successful. Perhaps we do need to reorganize the programme of work.

Mr. Mokteft (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I apologize for taking the floor again. We believe there is room for responding to some not very constructive proposals. What we proposed was that the debate be structured in blocs. That is because experience has shown that there is reason to change the working methods now, and not to wait until next year to improve them. Consistency and coherence are essential to a debate; it must have logic and orderly structure. There is a dynamic that evolves with the discussion that can lead to successful

results — as compared to a discussion where we begin with a topic in the morning, go to another subject in the afternoon, forget what we said in the morning, and then repeat the whole thing the next morning.

We therefore propose something that is based on logic, that is, to structure the debate so that we have a specific period of time to finish a topic, after which we move to another topic. That has coherence, and could be promising. We are therefore surprised to hear people who proclaim themselves to be inflexible and wish to make us wait until next year to improve our work.

Concerning the structuring of topics, the agenda (A/CN.10/L.67/Rev.1) begins with two substantive items. The first is on nuclear disarmament, the second on conventional arms. Those are the two official items on the Commission's agenda, which must begin with them. Why, then, should the informal debate begin before the Working Group debates? We do not understand that logic, which turns the agenda on its head. We should, rather, go with it as adopted, with the informal issues moved to the second level, unless other delegations have priorities other than nuclear disarmament and confidence-building measures on conventional weapons.

I also note from the document that we have received that Room D is available throughout the session. Does that mean that there will be parallel meetings?

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): Things are piling up here. No one has asked the Chair why he proposed this programme of work. Many suggestions continue to be made, and some of them are certainly worthwhile. However, I would like to focus on the main task. It is not a question of who begins or who wins here. We now have an agenda (A/CN.10/L.67/Rev.1) and we are going to begin our work. After listening to the next four speakers, I shall, with respect, explain why I introduced the programme of work, so that we have an understanding.

Mr. Burns (United Kingdom): The delegation of the United Kingdom would again like to commend you, Mr. Chair, for the work you have done, and especially on the programme of work you have produced for us today. We favour the format you have devised. We would prefer the oscillation between the Working Groups for a couple of reasons.

While I can see the logic of trying to pursue a topic to an end, and if that worked — well, who knows, maybe it would — the benefit of coming to things each day with a fresh perspective and, also, with the logistical advantage of having had time to consult with our capitals, seems to us to be the most constructive way forward. I think there is a real danger here of starting to unpick what we already have. We have it in our hand; let us just move forward. I really do recommend going forward with the agenda as proposed by the Chair.

Mr. Cassidy (Indonesia): Indonesia thanks you, Mr. Chair, for the programme of work you have provided us with. I would also like to thank all the colleagues who have made proposals concerning it. I would like to attempt — and this is only an attempt — to make everybody unhappy. I do not know whether it will work.

On the morning of Monday, 9 April, we will have Working Group I, and in the afternoon we will have an informal meeting on the fourth disarmament decade. On Tuesday, 10 April, we will have the informal meeting on methods of work. That is my proposal. If everyone can agree on a bloc, they can do that; if they can agree on an alternative, such as the one you have proposed, Sir, they can do that.

Mrs. Ledesma Hernández (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Cuban delegation would like to thank you again, Sir, for the proposal you presented. When we proposed changes to the programme of work, we did so in a constructive spirit intended to bring coherence to it on the basis of experience, especially last year, as well as in the interest of time in order that we could focus on proposals instead of stopping and having to take up items repeatedly. We think that our proposals are along the same lines as what has been proposed by Algeria and India. We therefore favour some sort of clustering that lets us focus on the issues.

As we understand it, when we establish an agenda for our work that includes items, we do so because those are our priorities. It therefore seems logical to us that we start the discussion. That has been our approach in making our proposals.

Lastly, I should like to respond to some of the proposals that have been made. While many delegations have expressed interest in discussing working methods and how to improve them — an idea that my delegation has also supported — we cannot understand how others see no room for changes to our programme of work methods and how they cling to the usual methods. I think that such a position is a bit inconsistent and lacking in sense, for it seems that there is momentum at this session to try to improve our working methods

based on past experience. That is why we ventured to put forward a proposal that might be acceptable to all.

I reiterate our support for the cluster proposal put forward by Algeria, which is in line with our own. I also say again that we must begin with the priorities. For that reason, we will be flexible about when the informal consultations take place.

Mr. Kvarnström (Sweden): I apologize for taking the floor a second time, but I wish to do so to address a larger point, one I believe is much more important than the structure of the agenda itself. It pertains to the negotiating dynamics that we use in this room. I find what I am now hearing extremely regrettable, if not to say disturbing, in what it shows about how we negotiate.

We had a package agreement on the structure of the agenda. We are a group of many countries, all having had significant demands made on them about what the Disarmament Commission should do. We have compromised in good faith throughout our discussions. First of all, we agreed not to have a discussion on the role of the Commission in the machinery — which we wanted — in order to compromise, once we understood that people preferred the term working methods. We agreed not to have that discussion as a main agenda item, despite the fact that a large number of delegations felt that we should. Then, despite strong feelings to the contrary, we agreed to have a discussion of a declaration on the fourth disarmament decade.

We also wanted there to be a specific focus on the nuclear agenda item and also on the conventional. We compromised on that as well. But after several days of negotiation we were very happy — despite the fact that we compromised on all of those very important points — that we finally had an agenda (A/CN.10/L.67/Rev.1), so that we could get to work.

Now we find that that carefully negotiated agenda is not actually worth what people said it was. It is not being stuck to. It comes as a cold shower to us to hear that before the ink on an agreement is even dry people are ripping it up. As yet one more last compromise, I would be happy to go along with rearranging the blocs for the agenda items, but let me state categorically that my delegation will not agree to the Indonesian proposal to move the working methods to plenary discussion.

I really think we should take a moment to consider how we negotiate and what we do once we do have an agreement.

Mr. Pak Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Concerning the topic under discussion, Sir, I would like to join other speakers who have spoken highly of your hard work. It is due to your hard work that we have come to have this kind of discussion now. Without agenda item compromises, it would have been impossible to have the kind of discussion we are now having.

Concerning the topic of the programme of work, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to join the voices of other developing countries. A previous speaker said it is not logical, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would like to add that in terms of the status of each agenda item, including informal items, there is a great need to look at the status of each — which place each item has in the programme of work, in the overall process of discussion. I think that where it is located will also give great weight to each item. Like a number of Non-Aligned Movement countries, therefore, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea strongly believes that the highest priority is nuclear disarmament and that its proper place is for it to be the first thing discussed on 9 April.

Concerning the issue of compromise, it is not only the other group that has made compromises. The Non-Aligned Movement countries have also made many compromises. Because of those compromises, all of us came to have agenda items on our table. I think that the programme cannot be an exception in requiring compromise.

Mr. Bavaud (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First of all, Sir, I would like to commend you on the way you have steered our work to arrive at an agreed agenda (A/CN.10/L.67/Rev.1). I would also like to commend you for the programme of work that you distributed this afternoon. Once again, my delegation has faith in you, as it has had regarding the other documents that you have distributed. In our opinion, you are the best person to lead the effort to reach compromise here. Your current proposal bespeaks your grasp of the package that we adopted this morning on the agenda.

I and my delegation are struck by the scepticism of several delegations about the various proposals you have made. As I have said several times, we have proven our flexibility. We have also said that we would have liked a separate agenda item specifically addressing working methods and the way the Disarmament Commission operates. That should not be forgotten as we work towards a compromise. I believe that my delegation was

not the only one to express that desire in the course of this substantive session.

We have now spent a week discussing the agenda; I do not think it would be a waste of our time to spend half a day discussing working methods. We could still easily discuss them and I think it makes perfect sense to discuss them now, while the ideas are still fresh. Given how we have conducted our work up until now, I think there is plenty to talk about, between the general debate and breaking up into working groups. I think that it is time to get to work as soon as possible, and we can begin with our working methods.

Mr. Langeland (Norway): Again, my delegation would like to recall that we are a deliberative forum. We should not become a forum of delegations competing about which is forfeiting the most compromises. My delegation has expressed its support, and continues to support, the Chair's proposal because it is his proposal. It does not come from Member States, but from the Chair in his capacity as Chair of the Commission. However, it is also built on a joint understanding of the agenda and how we should proceed with our work. That is why we support it.

My delegation notes with satisfaction the interest shown in looking into how the Commission operates. The question of clustering the agenda items is indeed one of the areas where the working methods of the Commission can be improved. My delegation still believes that the issue should first be discussed in informal consultations on how to improve the working methods. There are a number of topics to address. Once we do, we can then make a decision on how to proceed, instead of taking a limited number of recommendations or moving ahead with a limited number of improvements before having a broader discussion on the working methods of the Commission.

I hope that we will be allowed to do that. If that happens, my delegation would be ready to look into clustering of the topics. We see the wisdom of it, but we would like to have that discussion in the broader framework of improving the working methods of the Commission.

Once again, my delegation has full confidence in the Chair's proposal on how we organize our work.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now give the floor to the three remaining speakers on my list. I really do want to begin our work so, there being no additional requests for the floor, I now close the list of speakers.

Ms. Suzuki (Japan): I would like to thank you, Mr. Chair, for this joint programme of work. The Japanese delegation sees that it is very balanced and fair. Every agenda item and the topics in informal meetings are treated equally.

The Japanese delegation believes that discussing the agenda items in blocs has, to some extent, the benefit of enabling an intensive discussion. On the other hand, it embodies the idea that there is no other way out of the stalemate in the discussion. We do not have to repeat the same format as previous years and previous cycles. In allocating a longer period of time for discussion, therefore, we must consider how we can make that discussion meaningful during this first year of the new three-year cycle. Our discussion should be meaningful during the entire three-year cycle so that recommendations and a meaningful outcome may be generated. That means having an informal meeting on the first day, as provided for in the Chair's proposal, and then we start Working Groups I and II on the same day. Moreover, throughout the session we should be working in a balanced and fair manner, which would provide us with a clear idea and which would enable us to have fresh ideas. The Japanese delegation therefore supports the Chair's proposal.

Mr. Seifi Pargou (Islamic Republic of Iran): The first thing I would like to stress is that the programme of work before us is not the programme of work of the Conference on Disarmament (CD). It is the programme of work of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC) and, as such, it should not be taken as seriously as the programme of work of the CD.

Secondly, I see merits in the proposals made by my colleagues from Egypt, Cuba, Algeria and India. But as my good neighbour, the representative of Indonesia, has stated, maybe his proposal has the merit of making everybody equally unhappy. I think that that proposal is a way out, which is why I support it.

Also, with regard to the traditions of the UNDC, I think that the issue is one of tradition versus change and that it is better to start from the present moment. If we stick with the traditions of the UNDC, then when it comes to the discussion on the working methods and the adoption of any outcome document, we will have to remain faithful to the tradition and fight any changes in working methods.

Let us therefore start from now. Let us not strive to be traditionalists, but show some sort of flexibility so that we can move forward.

Mr. Bravaco (United States of America): I just wanted very briefly to second the observation of my good friend and colleague from Norway on his sense of the growing interest in looking at the working methods of the United Nations Disarmament Commission (UNDC). I find that very refreshing and a very positive development. I look forward to that discussion in just a few days' time, on Monday. In terms of tradition, we cannot be more supportive of tradition than having the same two working group agenda items for the last six years. Now, it will be on the UNDC's agenda for a total of nine years. If that is not tradition, I do not know what is.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): With the Commission's leave, I would like to give an explanation as to why this current programme of work was presented as such.

As participants will understand, before adopting the agenda (A/CN.10/L.67/Rev.1) that we had put together at noon today and before beginning our regular meeting of exchanges of views with the different groups, the Chair also met with the secretariat. That is something that has been forgotten in this eleventh hour debate. It is not just a matter of tradition; it is also a matter of effectiveness in the secretariat. The programme as put forth has been the working practice of the secretariat of the Disarmament Commission over the years. What is the reason behind that? In truth, I was wondering that myself, as were some delegations. Why do we not begin with the order set forth in the agenda? I now have the response. First, the modification of the agenda would set a precedent that would have to be adopted and recognized by the parties. More important, however, the programme of work allows for the meetings and the draft documents that are issued to be prepared by the secretariat in order to be discussed at the next meeting.

I have a proposal here that seems very logical to me. The friends of the Chair — whose names I have not announced, although I have already decided who they will be — have asked me for time to present their respective documents for discussion because they do not want the document to simply emerge from the discussions in its final form. I consider that to be of great importance. The two friends of the Chair for the two main items to be discussed include one representative from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and one from the Group of Western European and other States in the discussions of the two substantive topics.

I also wish to remind members that on the day that I submitted the Chair's proposed compromise, it included a note, not a footnote, as part of the draft agenda that I presented. It reads,

(*spoke in English*)

> "After listening to the discussions on working methods and on elements for a declaration of the fourth disarmament decade, drafts of the outcome documents will be distributed well in advance, by the friends of the Chair, in order to engage further informal consultations and in order to arrive at a consensus. The final decision will be taken in a plenary meeting of the UNDC."

(*spoke in Spanish*)

That is one example of the reasons for which the Chair, following the recommendation of the secretariat, had proposed that we begin with open debates on the two topics, namely, working methods and the fourth disarmament decade.

Immediately afterwards, we would start with plenary meetings on the first agenda item, followed by the second agenda item. In that context, I would prefer to deal with clusters to facilitate the work. We would complete the work of Working Group I and then move on to the second group. But that programme of work did not emerge from the ether or out of a magician's hat. It follows a practice that has taken place over many years and long before we organized this session.

I once again ask members not only for flexibility but also for understanding so that we can begin to address the work before us. We can make some changes. The Chair would be in a position to accept some logical changes. However, I reiterate that the submission of the document was based on the simple logic that it concerns a time management issue relating to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the secretariat and how they can best facilitate our work. There is no other reason for it. It is not aimed at changing the programme or the agenda. I therefore thought that it would simply be accepted at the outset without discussion. I thought it was well balanced.

The Working Groups will be led by a representative of NAM and by a representative of the European States. The informal meetings will have the same structure.

The idea is to have the best possible balance for the Commission.

I repeat that if the majority of representatives decide to work in clusters, especially with regard to the first and second substantive agenda items, then the Chair would have no problem with that. However, I just wanted to explain the rationale behind the document that I presented. As I said before when I introduced the document on Monday, it is a compromise proposal by the Chair.

I see that the representative of Algeria has asked for the floor. I hope that request is in order to show his support for me.

Mr. Moktefi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Sir. As you might expect, what I have to say is to express the support of all of the delegations, because you do not have only the secretariat, you also have the Bureau and the States members of the Commission who will also submit comments to you in order to facilitate your work and avoid further discussions on the procedures. Therefore, my delegation will support any programme proposed by the Chair rather than by the secretariat.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I think I may not have expressed myself clearly. The programme of work has been presented by the Chair with the support of the secretariat in terms of the working methods. There is no other option but to review the topics. That process was established long before we created the programme of work. Even today, the secretariat submitted a document that contained an error that resulted in a revision of the second page.

I assure the representative of Algeria that the Chair's proposal is based on proposals from the secretariat and is in line with accepted practices of the Disarmament Commission. I am also very pleased that everyone agrees to make the necessary changes so that the Commission can continue to move ahead.

If members agree, the Chair suggests that on the morning of Monday, 9 April, we begin with an informal meeting to address the working methods, with the fourth disarmament decade to be taken up in the afternoon.

I believe that we are ready to begin with the first substantive item on the agenda. I therefore propose that on Monday, 9 April, we take up the first substantive item, namely, nuclear disarmament. In the afternoon of 10 April we will convene Working Group II in the morning and in the afternoon. The next day we will hold informal discussions. On Thursday, after allowing time for the outcomes of the informal discussions, we would discuss the documents and then revisit those issues in the final meeting. The rest of the agenda would remain as I had proposed in the programme of work.

I would ask the secretariat to stay with us a bit longer so that documents can be distributed — or on Monday, if members prefer — with the understanding that the Working Group on nuclear disarmament will meet on Monday morning, as agreed this morning.

Mr. Farghal (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to support the proposal submitted by the Chair because, as I heard him say, it follows previous practice and was drafted based on precedent.

I have before me the programme of work adopted in 2006, the year that the Commission discussed ways of improving its working methods. The Chair's current proposals are fully aligned with that programme of work, which began by addressing substantive agenda issues and afterwards discussed working methods.

However, there is a discrepancy that I would like to have clarified by the secretariat. The current programme of work includes five different meetings on improving the working methods. Discussions on improving the working methods are indicated in brackets along with the plenary meetings.

However, the programme of work before us now includes only two informal meetings dedicated to methods of work, as well as the fourth disarmament decade. Does that mean that there is a difference between past practice and this programme of work? Or could it mean that we will have to hold parallel meetings alongside the formal meetings of the Working Groups? I just want clarity on that point.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): The Chair does not intend to have any parallel discussions. We have decided, as a matter of principle, that given the limited number of members in some delegations, we will hold all meetings at the plenary level to discuss the items we agreed in the programme of work. I do not remember exactly which delegation it was that asked about Room D. That room is reserved for possible meetings, not for parallel meetings of the Commission. If a group needs to meet, it will be available to it simply by informing the secretariat, which will make sure that the room can be made available to groups that deem it necessary to meet.

With the consent of members, I should now like to suspend the meeting for 15 minutes to discuss organization with the secretariat and take into consideration everything we have heard here. After that, we will provide members with the work programme.

The meeting was suspended at 5 p.m. and resumed at 5.45 p.m.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I am grateful to members for allowing me time to consult. At this moment, the secretariat is preparing the revised document on the programme of work, as arrived at through the consultations that we have had with participants here. In accordance with those consultations, the programme of work for the meetings beginning on Monday will be as follows.

At 10 a.m. on Monday, 9 April, we will hold the meeting of Working Group I, on nuclear weapons. At 3 p.m., Working Group II, on conventional weapons, will meet. At 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 10 April, we will hold the discussion group on methods of work and, in the afternoon, the informal discussion on the fourth disarmament decade will take place. The rest of the programme of work will remain as was laid out earlier, right through until 19 April. We have not reduced the number of meetings for any group, but we are trying to recover the two meetings we lost today.

On 19 April, as the draft document states, we will hold a meeting in the morning for analysing recommendations that have arisen and that may have been the subject of consultation with capitals or have been negotiated among or discussed with the Chair. Then in the afternoon we will begin Bureau meetings.

I should also emphasize that this new programme of work is based on the understanding that if either of the Working Groups are very efficient and complete their work before the deadline, that time will be reallocated to wherever it may be needed, such as to the group that needs it, whether on substantive matters or the discussions of the thematic groups. I am not sure whether any additional explanation is required; if not, I would like to thank everyone once again for showing willingness to work with me on this. There will not be any parallel meetings; all the work will be conducted in plenary meeting with those delegations wishing to participate. All are invited. As I said, the secretariat is preparing the new revised document, which will be distributed soon.

Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Commission agrees to adopt the programme of work, as revised.

It was so decided.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden to report on the chairmanship of Working Group II.

Mr. Kvarnström (Sweden): I am speaking in my capacity as Chair of the Group of Western European and other States. I have the honour to announce that we would like to nominate Ms. Véronique Pepin-Hallé of the Canadian delegation for the position of Chair of Working Group II, on conventional arms.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): Unless I hear any objection, I shall take it that the Commission decides to appoint Ms. Véronique Pepin-Hallé of Canada as Chair of Working Group II, on practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional weapons.

It was so decided.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): The Secretariat informs me that it has amended the document and that it is being circulated now.

I should also mention that the Chair has asked Ms. Lachezara Stoeva of Bulgaria to act as coordinator of the discussion group on elements for the fourth disarmament decade. I have also asked Mr. Bouchaib El Oumni of Morocco to act as coordinator of the discussion group on working methods. They have both agreed to do so. I apologize if I have pronounced that poorly.

May I take it that the Commission takes note of the appointment of those two individuals to work with the Chair in the two discussion groups?

It was so decided.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Moktefi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to congratulate my colleagues who have just been appointed to preside over the Working Group on Conventional Weapons. I also congratulate my colleague from Bulgaria on her appointment to coordinate informal discussions on the elements of the declaration on the fourth disarmament decade, as well as my colleague from Morocco on his appointment to coordinate the informal consultations on working methods.

I take the floor to remind the Chair that the agenda of the Commission that was adopted this morning still needs to be circulated.

The Chair (*spoke in Spanish*): The secretariat informs me that the amended agenda adopted this morning is not yet ready for distribution, as it is still being prepared in the official languages of the Commission. It will be available Monday morning for all delegations in the six official languages.

It has been another long yet fruitful day of work. I again thank delegations for their attendance, participation and support. I would remind members of the Bureau that there will be a meeting on Monday morning in Conference Room D.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.